



Celebrating March Brain Injury Awareness Month

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

During March, the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) is featuring stories about the impact of brain injury on individuals and families, as well as State resources and initiatives developed to provide supports and assistance. This week, NASHIA features the story of Josh who survived a traumatic brain injury and now receives supports from the Massachusetts Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) brain injury waiver program. Have a story to tell? Send to Susan Vaughn at publicpolicy@nashia.org.



"Thinking Outside the Facility": Massachusetts Offers HCBS Alternatives

With assistance provided by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's (MRC) Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waiver programs for individuals with brain injury, Josh is able to live in a supported living environment in lieu of institutional care. After sustaining a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as the result of car surfing gone awry, his family was faced with what alternatives would Josh have to live a life with purpose and satisfaction. With supports and accommodations, he is now able to live in the community and to get out of the house every day -- reclaiming his independence.

After two class action lawsuits which were settled in favor of plaintiffs with brain brain injury seeking community living, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts pursued two brain injury Medicaid HCBS Waivers, as well as a Money Follows the Person Demonstration project. An enhanced education and outreach program to ensure class members are aware of opportunities to leave institutional settings and reside in the community was also implemented.

MRC now operates three waivers:

- Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver (TBI Waiver)
- Acquired Brain Injury Non-Residential Waiver (ABI-N Waiver)
- Moving Forward Plan Community Living Waiver (MFP-CL Waiver)

Two other related waivers are operated by the Department of Developmental Services:

- Acquired Brain Injury Residential Habilitation Waiver (ABI-RH Waiver)

- Moving Forward Plan Residential Supports Waiver (MFP-RS Waiver)

The Commonwealth began offering services with State funding in 1985, which created the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP). Over the years, MRC has expanded its resources, services and diversified funding in order to do so with a combination of State revenue, Medicaid, federal grants, and trust fund dollars due to the advocacy efforts of the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts.



Hutchinson vs. Patrick

“The brain injuries experienced by these individuals are profound and life changing, but they need not result in a lifetime of institutional care. ...these individuals need “family relations, social contacts, work options, economic, independence, educational advancement and cultural enrichment.”

Olmstead v. L.C., 527 U.S.581, 600 (1999)



Massachusetts Strong . . .



Gabriela (Gabby) Lawrence-Soto is the Grant - Program Coordinator, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, (MRC) Community Based Services Department. In this position, she works with the “Improving Massachusetts Systems of Care for Elders Sustaining a Traumatic Brain Injury” project funded by the federal Administration for Community Living (ACL) TBI State Partnership grant. This is a collaborative project with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Brain Injury Association of



Sandy Biber became the first Director of Community Based Services, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), and oversees the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and Money Follows the Person (MFP) Waiver Programs and the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP). These programs provide community support and services for individuals with brain injury (BI) and other disabilities in order to live as independent as possible.

In Sept. 2017, Sandy presented



Nicole M. Godaire, CBIS, is the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA), which was incorporated in 1982 as a chartered affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America. Among its many accomplishments, the Association brought a lawsuit, along with Stavros Center for Independent Living, on behalf of five named plaintiffs (Hutchinson vs. Patrick) that led to a June 2, 2008, landmark settlement to enable individuals with acquired brain injuries to move out of

Massachusetts and local Aging and Disability Resource Consortia (ADRCs) to increase awareness of the incidences of TBI in the elder population, facilitate routine screening for TBI in all settings and improve access to brain injury information and resources for professionals, survivors and their families.

Gabby serves on the NASHIA Board of Directors and holds the office of Secretary. She also serves on the NASHIA Training and Education Committee.

information on the "Olmstead" lawsuits and actions taken by the State to comply via a webinar sponsored by NASHIA. The webinar is archived [here](#).

Sandy has also represented NASHIA on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Workgroup on 1915(c) Health and Wellness.

nursing facilities and into the community.

BIA-MA annually provides support, information and resources to approximately 14,000 survivors, families and medical professionals. BIA-MA sponsors more than 50 support groups throughout Massachusetts which provides a forum for sharing information about brain injury and an opportunity to meet others who share similar experiences and concerns. It also organizes a variety of educational, recreational and social activities.

Visit MA website



The Nebraska Brain Injury Advisory Council staff printed table tents, "I'm Uniting for Brain Injury," for members of the Advisory Council. Pictured above are: front row center, Nancy Coffmann, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired; back row left to right; Kristen Larsen, Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; ML Lehman, Educational Unit #16, Heather Leschinsky, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Carla Lasley, Nebraska VR; and Keri Bennett (far right), NE Brain Injury Program Director and member of the NASHIA Board of Directors. Taking the picture was Nancy Noha, who designed the "I'm Uniting for Brain Injury" table tents/logo.